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Resisting Temptation.

Then said Jesus unto him. Get thee hence Satan; for it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.

Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministred unto him

Mat IV. - 10 - 11.

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The story of Christ's temptation has been a great stumbling block in the way of many thoughtful people,- Not because of any discrepancy in the story itself,- but inasmuch as they have come to it with a preconceived habit of interpreting scripture in a literal manner,-

The church has all along persisted in putting into Christ's words- the meaning which succeeding ages have attached to them,- The question really is- what did these words mean- spoken in Judea, 1800 years ago,- when popular thought was almost entirely different from what it is to day,- The question usually put- is simply what do these words mean now?

Thus when the pronoun him- is applied to the ~~devil~~ principle of Evil,- when words are put into ~~his~~ its mouth, and ~~he~~ it is said to have ~~had~~ taken Jesus up into a high mountain,- because nowadays such language would indicate a personal devil,- it is maintained that the writers of the new

Testament - believed in such a being. - This tendency to judge the past by the present is well illustrated by a conception which arose during the days of witchcraft. - Previous to that time there is no hint that - these words - "then the devil taketh him up into the holy city and setteth him on a pinnacle of the Temple," meant anything more than that the devil led him thither, - But no sooner was the belief once firmly seated that witches could transport themselves & others through the air bodily, than Church divines ~~the learned~~ seized upon this passage - and exulted from it the idea that the devil flew first w the Temple then w the mountain & carried Jesus with him through the air. - & this passage was soon quoted in support of the belief which That is a very fair sample of the fashion in which a great many beliefs have found comfort and support in the Bible. -

Now the nearer you go toward the source of language the more it abounds in Metaphor. -

and the less words are used with strict philosophical
exactness.-- In ancient days, almost every
element and principle was personified in speech.-
Not because the ancients they believed them to be persons but
because of the imperfection of language.-- We have
abstract words to express abstract things.- Thus we
say of the dawn- that it precedes the sun- and the
clouds in the eastern sky- that they are tinged by
the sons rays.- But the ancients said that the
dawn gave birth to the golden handed son- and wove
for her bright child a brilliant garment.- We say
the sons heat dispels the clouds.- They, that he tore
from his shoulders this coat which his mother
wove.-- In brief the ancients first coined words for
themselves and their own life.- & when they had occasion
to speak of light and darkness- good & evil- ~~& such~~
of inanimate
things- & abstract principles
~~abstractions~~- they made shift to convey their ideas
through the same words.- Thus they were forced to
speak of elements & principles as persons like
themselves- and to give them sex- intelligence & will

not that they did this in thought - but only in speech. -- We have still one relic of this primitive habit in common use. - We say the sun sets - and thereby represent the sun as acting like a person. - Though nobody thinks of it so, - - I just simply bear in mind that when Matthew wrote this story of Christ Temptation - it was a habit of popular speech to speak of the evil principle in the universe as a person. -- Nothing could be more widely at variance with the whole genius of the Jewish religion than the belief in an evil deity - whose power and skill rivaled the God of love & Justice. -

The Jews were intensely believers in the One God - and ascribed to him such dominion as left no room for the sway of the Prince of Darkness. -

Never but in one ancient religion, that of Persia did the devil have real existence as a person - and there Theology gave him a place. - Neither in Jewish nor Christian Theology - is there any place for the devil - and he has only crept into

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~~the Church thought of~~ Church thought through a ~~a few words which have~~ misconstruction of language
~~the Bible~~. - Though there was a general belief in evil spirits in Christ's day, there cannot be shown any conception of a prince of evil spirits - ~~the head spirit~~ of all wickedness such as Milton's imagination pictured. - The evil had come to be principles in human nature, ~~was~~ spoken of as "he" - just as we speak of the moon as "she" - was personified in the speech of the people, - as a relic of the old language which personified everything. -

This at least establishes the possibility that Christ & his apostles might have spoken as they did without believing in a personal devil - or dreaming that any one would so pervert their language. - And for positive proof that they did not cherish any such belief - I point to the discrepancy between it and their constant faith in the supreme power of God. - Pauls words: "The powers that be are ordained of God" are but the echo of an underlying truth - running quite through the gospels - the truth that God's ~~love~~ good

providence so entirely fills up the universe as to leave no room for a devil to work in.-

If not who, then what was it from whence Christs temptation came.- & to which these words Get thee hence Satan.- were addressed?- what was it but the same thing which Christ rebuked.- when turning to Peter he said Get thee behind me Satan,- thou savorest not of the things that be of God.- but those that be of men?-- Surely Peter was not a personal Devil that he should be called Satan,- He was simply a man.- like all men.- possessed of this double nature about which Philosophers have prosed & Poets sung.-

There were within him a good & evil dispositions.- the one of which inspired pure thoughts & high resolves.- while the other suggested base & cowardly projects.- It could be nothing else than this evil side of Peters nature which Jesus rebuked as Satan.- It could

be none other than the evil side of his own nature which tempted Christ himself.— And now with this such a key to its meaning this story of his temptation gives us a beautiful glimpse of Christ's inner life.—

He has been pictured as higher than human souls— created without the tendencies toward evil which afflict ordinary men & women— even in such freedom from sinful thoughts & aspirations as marks divinity itself.— "If this were so it was no merit that he walked without sin,— for he had no intention to sin,— He set no example for us,— for being of a different race— it is impossible that we should follow in his footsteps,— He could not know the power of temptation— nor the sting of sorrow— since he was too far above the human to feel either.— Such a Christ could have nothing to do for us— save through the scheme of redemption wherein he should play the mechanical part of a ransom for our sin.— Further than this could we have no following.—

be none other than the evil side of his own nature which tempted christ himself—

Every man is tempted. said James. when he is drawn away of his own lust- and enticed.- Here we have the simple statement of fact- without any attempt to ~~fit~~ make a theory to fit it- or to fashion it into consisting with a theory already existing.-

It is a fact of everyones' experience. that there are tendencies in our nature. which not only await fair opportunities- but as it were- seek the smallest pretext- for arraying themselves in rebellion against the ~~reason~~ judgment.- and when we consider the persistency of these ~~temptable~~ tendencies - it is not strange that they have been ascribed to the influence of some exterior power.- Oft-times the most conscious effort to do one's duty- brings with it a temptation to disobey conscience.- The temptation will rise - even when it cannot

unable to support the shadow of an argument.- but will so persistently ask, Why should you do this thing? as to put your author-self at disadvantage - by, making it plead its case.- This is not at all peculiar to low and brutal conditions.- Indeed human nature under these conditions. has so little consciousness to oppose its own grossness. that scarce any conflict is felt.-: It is, in the, rather true of those more finely organized natures.- which are so closely attuned to an ideal life- as to be pained by the discords of the actual-

The soul that loves harmony.- alone knows what it costs, to be able to make harmony.-

It is an evidence of unusual dispensity. that one is obliged to struggle with besetting sins:- it is an indication that the higher nature is alive & active.-- Not he who lies grovelling in the dust.- but he who - on his feet is toiling over the rough road- feels his burden.-

It is such a nature as this of ours - which must clearly see the right - & most keenly feels the wrong - & whose temptations - if less sure of victory - are all the more bitter & trying. -

And does not this give us a glimpse of christs inner life - vastly different from that usually sought through the medium of the current theology! - - He has been pictured as higher than human nature - created without the tendencies toward evil which afflict ordinary men & women, even in such freedom from sinful thoughts and aspirations as marks divinity itself. - If this were so, it was no merit that he walked without sin - having no intention to sin. - He set no example for us - for being of different nature - it is impossible that we should follow in his footsteps. - He could not know the power of temptation, nor the sting of sorrow - being far far above the

human helpful either,- Such a Christ could have nothing to do for us - save through the scheme of redemption - wherein he should play the mechanical part of a ransom for our sin,- & further than this could avail us we following

Now in distinction from this behold the human Christ.- sitting alone & apart from his fellows as his meditative habit would incline.- ~~upon~~ in some ~~roof of the~~ elevated nook of the great temple.- for above the noise & bustle which surged through the busy city at his feet,- He is communing with himself.- Am I called to this mission.- appointed of God to put new life into these selfish - bigoted, superstitious souls- I see ~~beneath~~ me,- Can it be that I am of any importance amid ~~at~~ this great mass of humanity?- what can I do that will be of value to the world? What cares the Great Father of all whether I live or die? Something like this might have been this thought & into what channel ~~mine~~ mind have they not come,- And then his evil genius whispers prove the Fathers care,- Cast thyself down from hence - If thy life & service be of such importance as thou wouldst fondly dream,- As it is written He shall give his angels charge over thee - and in their hands they shall bear thee up,-

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." for prefers
his better nature & the risks to descend.-

Again he was climbed some one of the lofty
mountains which rear their heads above Jerusalem.-
& seated himself to enjoy the far reaching view.

The fertile valleys stretch away and away -
& wide - the rocky hills.- and through them the
long caravans richly laden with merchandise - slowly
wind.- City beyond city lies glistening in
~~lift it sparkling dress~~
~~into~~ the sunlight- and from afar the huge
brings the softened hum of industry and life.-

Now there are ~~an~~ few things which more strongly
suggest ambitious thoughts - than such a broad
~~broad~~
glimpse of the busy world.- One puts one's own present
littleness - & longs to cope with all this in importance.

And as Jesus sits meditating- the devil in his
inner whispers - See all this fair kingdom!- it is
thine - it rests over if Thou will take the steps to possess
thyself of it.- Thine Jews have long been expecting a
Messiah who should be their temporal King.- Thou

knowest thy strength with the people,- and host only
it say the word- when an invincible army shall
place thee on the throne,-- Forget this project of
reforming the religion, ~~and~~ devote thyself to driving
the Roman invader from the land- and a grateful
people shall crown thee King,- At just this point
in his history where Mahomet fell- Jesus conquered
the temptation,- He answered to himself ~~in the~~
~~language of Scripture~~ -. Get thee hence Satan -
For it is written Thou shalt worship the Lord
thy God- Him only shalt thou serve,-

Here was a man wrestling with his evil thoughts
just as thousands in day are wrestling,- only where
these thousands will yield to their satanic instincts-
and be dragged into sin,- he put the tempter
under his feet- and stood up in the full dignity
of his Manhood- loyal to truth & right,-

No human being ever stood where place and
time invited more strongly to projects of selfish
ambition,- None ever won a grander victory

over themselves.- Here every devoted Christian
in the cause of God & the good of humanity. so
entirely, when that devotion seemed such an
entire abandonment of every personal consideration.
Here is a character to win our truest admiration.-
Not ~~a~~ simply dressed in the robes of ~~an~~ an innocence
which never felt temptations power.- but strong
in the conquering might of virtue.- - Here is a
life to inspire love & gratitude.- Not devoted
to the good of Mankind - because there was
nothing else to do - or because that opened
the way to place and power.- but out of
a strong. indeed a passionate love for you
& every person who wears the human
form.- Here is one to be called sacred - to
command obedience not by virtue of any
prestige which birth had given.- but because
on many a battle ground he fought & conquered the
which appears as
sin & & wave himself ~~the~~ as the truest loved champion
of those very principles. which we wish to enthrone in our own hearts
~~who~~ ~~died~~ ~~about~~ ~~to the~~ cause of right.-

I expect that Christ stood in just as ~~s~~ surrounding places,- as mortal man every occupied.- He was assailed by just as fierce temptations,- and weighed down by just as heavy burdens,- as were ever fought or borne ~~by~~ His superiority did not consist in freedom from these - but in his ability to bear his sorrows nobly - and ~~triumphe~~ emerge triumphant from every contest with ~~the~~ the evil promptings of his heart.-

Is there a soul smarting under its affliction and crying out to God that its burden is too heavy to be borne,- let it, ~~to~~ cast to this brave soul of Jesus.- See what griefs were his,- what a constant sorrow sat brooding in his heart.-

Was it no trial that the very men he sought to aid - conspired to take his life.- that he could have no home ~~no~~ ~~quiet~~ no safety,- that he must walk the path of his daily duty with the certainty of a violent death before him,- That one of his disciples should

be so ~~taken~~ ashamed of connection with him as to deny him.- another should betray him & finally all should desert ~~betray~~ him.- Not one of his associates could fully understand or sympathize with him.- He trod the winepress alone.- There were none to lighten his ~~intense~~ heavy load of grief and care- and he bore it to the bitter end patiently and resignedly.- never harboring a doubt of ~~doubting~~ the goodness or Kindness of his Father.-

Are there any standing in uncertainty before our roads- while indination points to the one; conscience to the other.- Are there any now listening to the seducting voice of the tempter.- and saying to themselves that they cannot put away ~~resist~~ the inducements he offers.-

Any firmly struggling to maintain their manliness & womanhood in its integrity.- in the face of such adverse circumstances as seem to force them into crime.- let them catch inspiration from the example of this

great magazine,— for whom ~~wealth~~ wealth and power and fame shone with as bright a lure,— ~~and~~ whose need was just as sore.— Yet who by virtue of the power which God grants to every soul ~~who~~ who will seek Him it,— ~~stood~~ stood without swerving the path of his plain duty.—

Now if Jesus must pass through this trial of temptation who can hope to escape it.—

It is evident that he possessed a great amount of native integrity,— and from his youth up bore a spotless character.— If any soul ever appeared so strong that no assay of its virtue need be made, his was that soul.— and if God must test him before he could trust him — how much more ~~should~~ should we expect the trial.— The inspector looking over the tools in process of construction,— throws out some — of which trial is to be made.— If he select one without flaw or blemish and submit that is the severest test of its strength

We will certainly subject to proof. those which appear imperfect upon their face.- before ever he will trust them with his work.-

So if God the inspector of souls will not exempt even a royal nature as Christs from temptation,- how much more certain will he be to put us into the furnace, who are confessedly weak.-

I speak not of what may happen to some - but of what every soul must inevitably pass through.-

It is not enough that we are created innocent.- and preserve ourselves from sin by keeping entirely away from its reach,- something more is required of us,- the ability to walk amidst sin and repel its poisoned arrows.- You may rear your boy never so tenderly - keeping him even from evil companions.- and shutting out from his mind all knowledge of evil.- ~~But~~ Still the time must come when he shall go out into the world- and become the mark of all its temptations.- And then unless while you have

kept him out of danger - you have also trained him to meet it when it comes - all his past life will go for nought. - - No person can escape the ordeal, nor is right they should since it is Gods method of developing virtue. -

Under the glass of a hot-house - the plant will grow quickly to fair & large proportions, - sheltered from the northern blast, ~~and~~ its roots fed with nourishment - & its leaves bathed in constant sunshine, - a large tree might be speedily reared. - But of what value would its timber be - coarse grained and brittle it would snap with the slightest strain - and the most bungling workman would not put it where strength was required. - When are grown the compact fibers which rib the great ship. - the lithe and tapering mast against which the tempests hurl themselves in vain, - the stout oak planks which boast the fury of the treacherous wave, - Not on some tropic island - where only gentle

long as sight extends through the foliage - Summer reigns the whole year long - ~~For~~ They grow upon our mountain hillsides where fierce storms rock the earth - and lift many a former giant prostrate at their feet - where the winds tear the great limbs from their sockets - and whistles savagely through the mere bony arm made - where the frost dries up their sap - and the ice pinches up their roots - there grow the great gnarled oaks - whose sinewy knots are strong to bear the burden & resist the tide -

Go into our workshops - and see how the ore from the mines must be heated and hammered and rolled before it is fit to bear the strain of use - Everything which ends be strong in itself - whether or art tries in the severest fashion - and can only thus develop its power -

So with the human soul - it is only strong in righteousness - after many a battle with the storms of temptation - Only then is it fit to serve

the moving cause,- It must needs be that offenses come, said Jesus.- × if evil is a necessity then it has some purpose to fulfill.- And this is its purpose. to try the souls of the children of men.- and develop in them a virtue and integrity which no breath of sin can tarnish.- Innocence may be pretty.- but the virtue which has conquered temptation is noble, + brave & fit for the service of life.-

The Problem of vanishing sin from ~~time~~ ~~years~~ ~~days~~ + the worlds heart- is solved only when we can, such vanquish the temptations which assail us,- some people think it is to be accomplished by abolishing the temptation,- For instance that corruption can be cured by doing away with the incentive to steal.-

But so long as the Devil has power over human hearts- so long will they devise corrupt practices in spite of all that can be done.- There lies the cure, in loosing ~~them~~

to say yet that here satan - with such assured command that the Devil shall obey,- As life grows and expands - temptations will multiply.- That cannot be avoided - for whenever the individual is allowed longer liberty - his power to sin increases with his power for good.- What follows - why the moral sense of the people must rise in new power - to overbalance the stronger temptation.- Or satan gains command of the state - and drives it to wreck + death.- That is the secret of the downfall of the old republics - Their growth in morality did not keep pace with the growth of intellect.- They could not stem the tide of vice which rose in upon them - and so they were engulfed by it.-

For remember,- these two forces the good + evil dispositions - which make every individual soul their battle ground,- are struggling for the supremacy over the life of a people,- and as per one, so per the nations - the power to resist temptation is the power which sustains health + prosperity - - -

I say with larger life - more power - & greater freedom always comes temptation more numerous and strong. - Young men often think there is no harm in their "sowing a few wild oats" and indeed society often treats them as though that were the proper method of acquiring a knowledge of the world. - They quiet their consciences - by whispering that when the fever of youth shall have burnt out - there will be no spur towards excess - and they shall perforce settle into sober & industrious citizenship. - But this is the grossest self deception, For with manhood will come manhood's temptations, - and as those of youth are not overcome - by so much is the power of vanquishing later evil, weakened. - Every young man ought to know that the older he grows - the more he acquires. - the wiser he gets - the more will he be tempted. - If he cannot silence the young devil which in early life grasps his conscience by the throat. -- what shall he his chance

for
~~x~~ the wasting when that devil has waxed powerful & gained a knowledge of the world.- in mature life.- It is true that the youthful passions will die out.- But the evil power which tempts him under their guise only assumes a new form.- and goes steadily on at his old business.-

Many a boy is to day indulging in foot courses - ~~about~~ without dreaming that he is making himself a thief.- and yet he is, in just this way.- He is learning to submit to the tempter.- and by and by when he puts into his heart the impulse to take something which is not his own - as I verily believe he does put it into every human heart,- the man shall have no more power to resist him than he did when a youth.- Let me say to all Young men that the integrity of the grey haired men they see about them is not the consequence of freedom from temptation - and but they are to hope for no such immunity.- It has been won & preserved by many a hard fight with

assails every heart-

that tempter, who ~~shall surely assail you~~ - ~~and~~
~~the season you learn to meet him with~~
~~a determined opposition which give assurance~~
~~of victory. the better for you.~~ Let me say
to myself - and all before me - that since
no one of us can escape a trial of our
moral strength and courage - nor can tell
how severe the test shall be, - it behooves
us as we value character, position, happiness,
in brief our whole welfare here and hereafter,
to strengthen ourselves against this lurking
demon - who strikes at all - in arming a
blow against our virtue - We despise the
thief, - who pursuing a trifle watches - or steals his
thousands through fraud. - We ridicule or
pity the Ambitious man who bastes his
manhood for office or the hope of office, -
We are horrified by the scowling Murderer
led in irons through the streets, - but the
thought same ever crossed our minds

what if I were such a thing as that,- and yet can we be quite sure that we never shall be?- If we have not in full power the temptation which assailed them, and stood upright where they fell,- then & only then ~~should~~ can we feel entirely safe,- - Suppose the Devil were to take us up into a mountain- & showing us but a small part even of the kingdoms of the earth,- promise it to us if we would fall down & worship him!- should we answer Get thee hence Satan!- - - -

And none of us can know if just such a temptation shall not come to us,- No, my friends- we are not safe from the commission of even the worst crimes. & follies,- until our conscience can look this devil squarely in the face- every time he rises- ~~and bid him down to the infernal depths from whence he came~~ and awe him into obedience,- - -

When Christ temptation was finished Behold says the text angels came and ministered unto him,- And I suppose that means

what every one experience who has conquered the evil - will tell better than words of mine. -
I suppose that in the whole realm of experience there is no greater moment than that which follows a victory over some evil tendency or passion. - The world has nothing to offer so dear as the smile of an approving conscience. -
And this Angel Ministry waits upon every conqueror on life's battle field. - It was no exceptional feature ~~of this~~ pertaining to Christ's case alone. - for as he was the type of perfect manhood - so his experience shall be theirs who follow in his footsteps. - And even as heavenly visitants came to him. - laden with peace - inspiring new strength & life, - filling his whole soul with triumphant joy & freedom, - So shall they come to ~~many one of~~ all his followers - who shall conquer as he did - the evil in their own hearts. -